

SYCAMORE ISLAND PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS

Trail to Sycamore Island, spanning Clara Barton Parkway
Glen Echo Vicinity
Montgomery County
Maryland

HAER No. MD-97

HAER
MD
16-GLENECHY,
3-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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I. INTRODUCTION

Location: Clara Barton Parkway milepost 2.23, 2.8 miles from Interstate 495; carries pedestrian trail to Sycamore Island over Clara Barton Parkway in Montgomery County, within George Washington Memorial Parkway.

FHWA Structure No. 3300-035T.

Date of Construction: 1967-1968.

Type: Reinforced concrete box girder bridge with spiral ramp.

Designer: Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) with approval from the National Park Service (NPS). Plans prepared by BPR Region 15 Bridge Design Office.

Contractor: Smith Brothers Pile Driving, Inc.

Present Owner: National Capital Region, National Park Service.

Present Use: Handicapped accessible pedestrian crossing over the GWMP.

Significance: The bridge was built as part of the extension of the parkway along the Maryland shores of the Potomac River and underscores the NPS commitment to maintaining public access to recreational facilities.

Project Information: Documentation of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and Clara Barton Parkway was undertaken as a multi-year project by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a combined division of the National Park Service, Robert Kapsch, Chief. The project was sponsored by the Park Roads Program of the National Park Service, John Gingles, Deputy Chief, Engineering and Safety Services Division. The Project Supervisor was Sara Amy Leach, HABS Historian. Bridge reports were prepared by Elizabeth M. Nolin (1988); Michael P. Kucher (University of Delaware, 1993); and Jennifer P. Wentzien (University of Washington, 1994).

HABS Report No. VA-69 prepared by Timothy Davis (University of Texas) provides an overview history of the entire parkway project. Jack E. Boucher and Jet Lowe produced the large-format photographs. The Washington-based summer 1994 documentation team was headed by landscape architect Tim Mackey (Harvard University, Graduate School of Design).

II. HISTORY

The Brookmont Pedcstrian Overpass (HAER No. MD-98) and the Sycamore Island Pedestrian Overpass are located along the Clara Barton segment of the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP). The bridges are of similar design and construction and employ dramatic spiral ramps.

Maintaining access to National Park Service (NPS) sites along the historic C&O Canal has been difficult due to the length of the park and limited access to the parkway (one of the fundamental tenants of parkway design). According to the final report, the bridges provide "excellent access to the outdoor recreational facilities of the National Park Service..., not only to the general public, but, due to the absence of steps and steep grades,... provide an opportunity for the handicapped and senior citizens...."¹ The bridge is located near Glen Echo Heights, Maryland. Proposals included a continuation of the bridge across the Potomac to Sycamore Island.

Description:

The Sycamore Island Pedestrian Overpass is a three span overpass connected to a 320 degree spiral ramp. The overpass is comprised of a 54' center span and 23' and 24' adjacent spans. The reinforced concrete deck is a cast in place box beam structure and measures 10' wide and 5' deep. The deck is centered about a 60' vertical curve and slopes at approximately 12%. The ramp is continuous with the overpass and descends at approximately 12% on a 17'-6" radius (center line of walkway). The bridge is supported by reinforced concrete abutments and six 27" diameter piers. Spread footings provide a foundation for the abutments and cast in place concrete caissons support the piers. Steel railings and timber guardrails were specified. The adjacent areas were seeded with Kentucky Bluegrass, red fescue and Kentucky 31 (tall fescue). Final costs were reported at \$59,617.^{2g}

¹Bureau of Public Roads, "Final Construction Report Project 100A11."

²Ibid.

III. SOURCES

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads. Plans for Proposed Project 100A11. Microfiche reductions of original construction drawings on file at the Bridge Inspection office of the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division, Federal Highway Administration, Sterling Virginia.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads, "Final Construction Report, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Project 100A." 1968. Report available from the remote storage facility, drawer 208, of the Eastern Federal Lands Division, Federal Highway Administration, Sterling, Virginia.

U.S. Department of the Interior, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), No. VA-69, "George Washington Memorial Parkway," 1994. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. "Structure Inventory and Appraisal Sheet - Structure No. 3300-035T." 4/21/93.